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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004704

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SUBJECT: TURKEY PREFERS SUPPORTING ROLE IN LEBANON PKO

REF: STATE 130906

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Ambassador advised MFA Deputy U/S Uzumcu of US efforts to finalize a UN resolution on Lebanon. He urged the GOT to make public its support for a resolution that would bring about an urgent cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and the establishment of a robust international stabilization force (PKO). Uzumcu voiced Turkey's support for a robust PKO under UN auspices, which would be the most credible option regionally, and said the GOT has begun internal deliberations on a Turkish contribution. Uzumcu suggested a simultaneous progress toward ending the violence in both Lebanon and Gaza. Ambassador urged a serious Turkish role in any Lebanon PKO. He said Lebanon is obviously very urgent and the difficulty of ending hostilities there should not be further complicated, but also recognized the importance of working on Palestinian issues, too. There was a brief discussion of engagement with Syria. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Deputy U/S Uzumcu welcomed the Ambassador's review of efforts to quickly finalize a UNSCR on Lebanon that calls for an urgent cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the expansion of UNIFIL into a robust stabilization force capable of managing a cease-fire, resolving humanitarian issues and facilitating the Israeli withdrawal (reftel). Uzumcu inquired about the timing of an Israeli withdrawal in relation to an expanded international force. Ambassador stressed that it would be irresponsible for the UN to demand a withdrawal in advance of the placement of a stabilization force. Hezbollah violence would continue, and the Israelis would as well.

PLAYING A SUPPORTING ROLE

¶3. (C) Uzumcu welcomed a stabilization force under a UN umbrella as the most acceptable regionally and one that Turkey could embrace, but acknowledged that weaknesses in the current UNIFIL mandate must be addressed. He said the MFA met with the Turkish General Staff (TGS) on August 9 to discuss possible GOT contributions to a Lebanon PKO. He repeated Turkey's interest in logistics (including use of facilities in Turkey), humanitarian relief, health care and

possibly force protection, but not combat troops per se. The GOT is reluctant to provide troops to support implementation of UNSCR 1559. Turkey, Uzumcu said, does not want to be at the forefront of such a mission.

14. (C) Ambassador suggested that Turkey consider a Lebanon PKO airlift -- of which the military here has plenty -- and equipping/training the LAF. The latter will be important to strengthen the LAF's abilities to independently ensure Lebanon's sovereignty and would build off of Turkey's experience with Afghan, Iraqi and other forces. Uzumcu agreed that Turkey should be able to help the LAF but reserved comment on air support pending further discussions with TGS.

DON'T FORGET PALESTINE

15. (S) The GOT is feeling significant pressure from the public to denounce the Israeli effort, Uzumcu stated, and said he had advised Israeli Ambassador Avivi that the GOT would maintain a publicly critical stance on Israeli activities in Lebanon. He expressed concern that the crisis in Lebanon has taken priority over the Palestinian conflict and suggested an effort to bring about a simultaneous cease-fire in both areas. Some are saying that Israel will reinvigorate its actions against the Palestinians once it is no longer engaged in Lebanon. The Ambassador acknowledged the need to resolve both issues but emphasized that the significant level of violence in Lebanon called for immediate action. A resolution of this conflict would allow the international community to focus on the Palestinian problem.

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ENGAGING SYRIA

16. (S) Uzumcu also said that the West will need to engage Syria. Ambassador reminded Uzumcu of our views on Syria, but said that now may be a good time for Turkey, if it wishes, to use its relationship with Syria to support Lebanon, a UN resolution, an international stabilization force and the return of Israeli soldiers held hostage. Uzumcu agreed, and said Turkey had already engaged Syria on this issue. Israeli Ambassador Avivi had indicated to the GOT that Israel would consider withdrawing its forces from Sheba'a Farms as part of an overall package on Lebanon. The GOT intended to approach Syria about disavowing its claims to the region. Syrian Deputy FM Arnous will visit Ankara on August 11 for the first of a series of regular high-level meetings, and the GOT will use that opportunity to encourage Syria's cooperation with the international community.

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WILSON